

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-16

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FM AMEMBASSY KUWAIT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0679

INFO USINT ALGIERS

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE KUWAIT 3600

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: BTRA, ETRD, EFIN, KU

SUBJECT: U.S. CHAMBER OF COMMERCE OFFICIALS VISIT KUWAIT.

REF: STATE 175235

1. U.S. CHAMBER OF COMMERCE VICE-CHAIRMAN CLINTON MORRISON AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS DIRECTOR JOHN CALDWELL VISITED KUWAIT, AUGUST 24-25. IN MEETINGS WITH MINISTER FINANCE AND OIL ATEEQI, MINISTER ELECTRICITY AND WATER AL-GHANIM, CHAMBER OF COMMERCE PRESIDENT AL-SAGAR, AND SEVERAL LOCAL BUSINESSMEN, MORRISON AND CALDWELL SOLICITED VIEWS REGARDING PROPOSED QUADRILATERAL CONFERENCE (REFTEL).

2. ALL KUWAITIS RESPONDED POSITIVELY TO IDEA OF CONFERENCE, AND THEY ALL AGREED THAT THE KUWAIT POINT OF CONTACT SHOULD BE THE CHAMBER OF COMMERCE. KUWAITIS GAVE CONFLICTING ADVICE AND WERE NOT IN AGREEMENT ON OTHER ASPECTS OF THE PROPOSAL. SOME ADVISED THAT US/KUWAIT BI-LATERAL MEETINGS WOULD BE PREFERABLE, AT LEAST INITIALLY, TO MULTI-LATERAL MEETINGS. SAGAR RECOMMENDED WORKING THROUGH ARAB CHAMBER OF COMMERCE IN BEIRUT, BUT MOST OTHER KUWAITIS ADVISED AGAINST DOING SO. SAGAR ALSO RECOMMENDED

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HOLDING SUBJECT CONFERENCE LATER RATHER THAN SOONER.

3. ALL AGREED THAT THOSE REPRESENTING KUWAIT OTHER ARAB COUNTRIES SHOULD BE SELECTED VERY CAREFULLY BUT THEY FELT THAT INEVITABLY REPRESENTATIVES OF GOVERNMENTS WOULD HAVE TO BE ON ANY ARAB DELEGATION TO QUADRILATERAL CONFERENCE. IN SHORT, KUWAITIS LIKED THE IDEA IN GENERAL BUT RECOGNIZE THERE ARE NUMBER OF DETAILS TO BE WORKED OUT IN PUTTING CONFERENCE TOGETHER.

4. COMMENT: KUWAITIS ARE BUSINESSMEN. CHAMBER OF COMMERCE HERE IS A STRONG INSTITUTION AND MOST GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS ARE ALSO BUSINESSMEN. THEREFORE IT NOT SURPRISING KUWAITIS RESPONDED RATHER POSITIVELY TO SUGGESTIONS FOR CONFERENCE. ALMOST ALL EXPRESSED GRATITUDE TO MORRISON AND CALDWELL FOR VISITING KUWAIT. THEY REITERATED A POINT MADE TO US VERY OFTEN WHICH IS THAT THEY WISHED TO SEE GREATER INTEREST IN THE REGION BY AMERICAN BUSINESSMEN.

5. THROUGHOUT THE DISCUSSIONS THERE WAS RECOGNITION THAT PROPOSED CONFERENCE INEVITABLY WOULD HAVE POLITICAL AS WELL AS ECONOMIC OVERTONES. SOME KUWAITIS FELT THERE WAS STILL RESISTANCE TO HIGHLY PUBLICIZED MEETINGS WITH AMERICANS. ON OTHER HAND SOME SEEMED MORE NERVOUS ABOUT MEETING WITH EUROPEANS, AMERICANS AND JAPANESE ALL AT ONCE. THEY APPEARED PARTICULARLY UNEASY ABOUT MEETINGS OF THIS NATURE WITH THE JAPANESE.

6. FROM EMBASSY POINT OF VIEW, VISIT WAS USEFUL IF FOR NO OTHER REASON THAN AS A PUBLIC RELATIONS EXERCISE. WE THINK KUWAITIS ARE INTERESTED BUT WILL WANT TIME TO MULL OVER PROPOSALS MADE BY CALDWELL AND MORRISON.
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